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Economic and environmental questions: cartography

Sixteenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The Sixteenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific, convened in accordance with Economic and Social Council decisions 2000/229 of 26 July 2000 and 2002/229 of 23 July 2002, was held in Okinawa, Japan, from 14 to 18 July 2003.

The present report briefly describes the activities carried out by the Conference and presents its major findings and recommendations, including the resolution that requires that the Seventeenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific be convened for five working days in 2006, with a primary focus on the continued and strengthened contribution of cartography and geographic information in support of the implementation of Agenda 21.

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Introduction

1. The Sixteenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific, convened in accordance with Economic and Social Council decisions 2000/229 of 26 July 2000 and 2002/229 of 23 July 2002, was held in Okinawa, Japan, from 14 to 18 July 2003. The Conference was attended by 302 representatives and observers from 44 countries,[1] 5 specialized agencies and international scientific organizations[2] and 30 invited speakers. The Conference elected the representative of China as President.

2. The provisional agenda of the Conference was prepared by the United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific at its fifteenth session (Kuala Lumpur, 11-14 April 2000).[3] The Conference has been recognized as a regional forum where governmental officials, planners, scientists and experts from Asia and the Pacific and other regions address the common needs and problems, experiences and best practices in the fields of cartography and geographic information, including educational and training aspects, scientific and technological requirements, implementation issues and benefits. The Conference considered the progress made in the development and implementation of national spatial data infrastructures since the Fifteenth Conference and the specific contributions of cartography and geographic information in support of the implementation of Agenda 21.[4]

3. The work of the Conference was organized around three technical committees established to deal with a range of specific issues pertinent to cartography, surveying, land management, geographic information technologies and spatial data infrastructure in support of sustainable development as defined by an agenda item of the Conference. Committee I, on development needs and institutional capacity-building, was chaired by the representative of Japan; Committee II, on fundamental data, including their collection and management in an integrated approach, was chaired by the representative of China; and Committee III, on spatial data infrastructures and their development in Asia and the Pacific, was chaired by the representative of Republic of Korea.

4. The Conference adopted seven resolutions, including an expression of gratitude. The resolutions reflected both the spatial data infrastructure issues expressed in plenary sessions and specific matters debated in the three technical committees of the Conference. The proceedings of the conference are issued in one volume, containing the report of the Conference and the resolutions adopted. The technical papers submitted to the Conference were distributed to the participants, and the report of the Conference, already published (E/CONF.95/7), will be mailed to all participants and disseminated through the geographical names web site of the United Nations Statistics Division (http://unstats.un.org/unsd/geoinfo).

Findings

5. The Conference reviewed the status of the resolutions of the Fifteenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific and acknowledged with appreciation the work performed by the working groups of the Permanent Committee on Geographic Information System (GIS) Infrastructure for Asia and the Pacific during the past three years. The Conference highlighted some

significant achievements, including regional geodetic observation campaigns, a pilot project on administrative boundary data, Asia-Pacific spatial data infrastructure clearing house, cadastral template and training by the Permanent Committee in Hainan, China. The Conference acknowledged the policy on data sharing developed by the Permanent Committee and recognized the importance of developing a pan-Asia-Pacific fundamental data set and of continuing the development of the clearing house in order to enable the data sets to be accessed by member countries.

6. Country reports were provided by 12 countries in the Asia and Pacific region: Australia, China, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Malaysia, Nepal, New Zealand, Singapore, Thailand, Vanuatu and United Arab Emirates, plus Nicaragua. Major trends in the Asia and Pacific region, according to the reports, included: (a) prioritization of institutional capacity-building and clearing house development for better data access and use in spatial data infrastructure development and implementation; (b) the relationship between land administration and spatial data infrastructure; and (c) strengthening of communication and cooperation between countries in the region for the acquisition and sharing of spatial data through the activities of the Permanent Committee.

7. The Conference, through the work of Committee I on development needs and institutional capacity-building, presented and discussed relevant aspects related to capacity-building experiences in different countries, a development needs questionnaire and cadastral issues, including cadastral template, marine cadastre and the relationship between cadastral and topographic mapping. The Conference Committee noted that capacity-building was a concept that involved the development of both human and social capital and included both capacity assessment and capacity development at three levels — societal, organizational and individual. The Committee stressed that the Permanent Committee should foster and create strategic linkages to other agencies and organizations involved in capacity-building.

8. The Conference, through the work of Committee II on fundamental data, acknowledged the progress made by the Permanent Committee in implementing policies for sharing fundamental data and developing regional fundamental data sets, as well as the progress made in respect of the Global Mapping Project. The Conference, encouraged by those achievements, endorsed the Permanent Committee on Geographic Information System Infrastructure for Asia and the Pacific Policy Statement for an Asia-Pacific Boundaries Dataset and its Basic Principles for Developing and Utilizing the Asia-Pacific Regional Fundamental Dataset. The Conference recommended that the Permanent Committee continue to develop regional fundamental data sets and clearing house and GIS applications and to provide support for a training programme on capacity-building in fundamental data, offered by the Geological Survey Institute of Japan and funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency. The Conference also recommended that the Permanent Committee undertake those tasks in collaboration with other initiatives, such as the Global Mapping Project, the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names, the United Nations Geographic Information Working Group, the United Nations Geographic Database Project and the Second Administrative-level Boundaries Data Set Project.

9. Spatial data infrastructure and its development in Asia and the Pacific were covered by the work of Committee III. The Conference Committee discussed

relevant aspects related to the promotion of the development of spatial data infrastructures in the region and proposed the following: (a) continued development of a regional geodetic infrastructure; (b) identification of fundamental data sets and linkages to statistical information; and (c) development of the role of cadastral and land tenure layers within the regional spatial data infrastructure. The work of the Committee also addressed technical issues dealing with the development and integration of the cadastral and land tenure layers within the regional spatial data infrastructure using geodetic referencing techniques, including the definition of the marine cadastre concept, the necessity of integration of cadastral and topographical databases, the need to further develop distribution mechanisms for open communication systems and the development of appropriate linkages between the Asia and the Pacific spatial data infrastructure and other global initiatives.

10. Presentations from international scientific organizations highlighted the significant developments and advances in positioning techniques and high-resolution satellite images, such as Ikonos, EROS A and QuickBird, as well as other applications and technologies associated with geo-spatial information, in particular their involvement and contribution in support of spatial data infrastructure initiatives. Two presentations stressed the importance of data access and dissemination through Internet-based tools, such as portals and electronic atlases. It was asserted that a well-designed portal as a part of spatial data infrastructure could better provide easy data access and a prompt response in emergencies, and an Internet-based atlas might politically appeal to a given country. One presentation stressed the vital and basic role played by the spatial standards in the integration and interoperability of geographic information. In the development of such standards, international cooperation with organizations with a common objective, such as ISO/TC/211 and OpenGIS Consortium, is most essential and indispensable.

11. The deliberations of the three conference committees confirmed that the concept of national spatial data infrastructure was gaining recognition in the Asia and Pacific region as a fundamental asset of a country, equal to its roads, communication networks and other public utilities. It was also stressed that developing a successful national spatial data infrastructure must be seen as a socio-technical and socio-economic exercise rather than as a purely technical one. In other words, the challenge for the geographic information community is not only determining how to harness the enormous potential of geo-information technologies, but also having the ability to restructure national mapping agencies and other governmental organizations, to cooperate with one another and to create regional and global data infrastructure standards.

12. A list of the seven resolutions adopted by the conference and the proposed provisional agenda for the Seventeenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific are attached in annexes I and II. The activities recommended by the Conference and those required for the preparation of the Seventeenth Conference that are deemed to be of a continuing nature have been included in the strategic framework for the biennium 2006-2007 under programme 7, subprogramme 5 (A/59/6 (Prog. 7)), and it is anticipated that they will be incorporated into the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2006-2007. Inclusion of those activities is not expected to give rise to additional expenditures. In the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005, those activities, which are of a continuous nature, fall under section 9, Economic and social affairs.

Recommendations to the Economic and Social Council

13. In view of the continued and important contributions made by cartography, geo-information technologies and spatial data infrastructure applications to decision makers, planners, scientists and the public at large and the essential contribution the United Nations regional cartographic conferences for Asia and the Pacific and the Permanent Committee on GIS Infrastructure for Asia and the Pacific continue to provide to member States in the geographic information field, the Conference recommended that the Economic and Social Council:

(a) Endorse its recommendation that the Seventeenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific be convened for five working days in 2006, with a primary focus on the continued and strengthened contribution of cartography and geographic information in support of the implementation of Agenda 21;

(b) Request the Secretary-General to take measures, where appropriate and within available resources, to implement the other recommendations made by the Sixteenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific. In particular, The United Nations should continue to support surveying, mapping and spatial data infrastructure activities in the Asia and Pacific region and, inter alia, continue, within available resources, to facilitate the participation of the least developed countries and the small island developing States of the region.

Notes

[1] Australia, Bahrain, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Canada, China, Fiji, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Japan, Jordan, Kiribati, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Lebanon, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Netherlands, New Zealand, Oman, Pakistan, Philippines, Qatar, Republic of Korea, Russian Federation, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Samoa, Saudi Arabia, Sierra Leone, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Sweden, Thailand, Tuvalu, Trinidad and Tobago, United Arab Emirates, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, United States of America, Vanuatu and Viet Nam.

[2] International Cartographic Association, International Society for Photogrammetry and Remote Sensing, International Federation of Surveyors, United Nations Human Settlements Programme and World Food Programme.

[3] *Report of the Fifteenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific, Kuala Lumpur, 11-14 April 2000* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.01.I.2), annex II.

[4] *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3-14 June 1992* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: *Resolutions adopted by the Conference*, resolution I, annex II.

Annex I

List of resolutions

1. Asia-Pacific spatial data infrastructure
2. Regional geodesy
3. Fundamental data
4. Cadastre and spatial data infrastructure
5. Capacity-building
6. Seventeenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific
7. Expression of gratitude to the host Government

Annex II

Provisional agenda for the Seventeenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific

1. Opening of the Conference.
2. Election of the President and other officers of the Conference.
3. Adoption of the agenda and other organizational matters:
   (a) Consideration and adoption of the rules of procedure;
   (b) Adoption of the agenda;
   (c) Establishment of technical committees and election of chairmen and other officers;
   (d) Organization of Conference work;
   (e) Credentials of representatives to the Conference.
4. Objectives of the Conference.
5. Report of the Permanent Committee on Geographic Information System Infrastructure for Asia and the Pacific.
6. Conference reports:
   (a) Reports on the implementation of resolutions of the United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific;
   (b) Country reports.
7. Invited papers.
8. Reports of the technical committees of the Conference.
9. Review of the achievements of the Conference.
10. Provisional agenda of the Eighteenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific.
11. Adoption of the report of the Seventeenth United Nations Regional Cartographic Conference for Asia and the Pacific.

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Corrigendum

In paragraph 8, page 3 of the document E/2004/57, line 12 should read: Geographical Survey Institute instead of Geological Survey Institute.

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